



Super Nova! Jeffrey Katzenberg Joins Kimbal Musk's Drone Nova Sky Stories: "A Spectacular Technology Platform" For "Family Branded Storytelling," Ex-DreamWorks Boss Says



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COMMENTS



Jeffrey Katzenberg, left, and Kimbal Musk
Michael Buckner for Deadline/Getty



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Without a doubt there are people who would pay serious money to see [Jeffrey Katzenberg](#) hanging out and trudging through the sand and dirt at [Burning Man](#).

However, beyond the juxtaposition of the seemingly buttoned down ex-DreamWorks chief and the annual *Mad Max*-ish desert festival, Katzenberg himself is hoping there are millions who will pay to see drone-fueled storytelling light up the skies over deserts and stadiums around the world with [Nova Sky Stories](#).

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"Dodger Stadium is the end goal," Katzenberg told Deadline in a joint interview with Nova founder Kimbal Musk company. "We're not going to get there in a heartbeat, if we haven't built the brand," the WndrCo founder explains of the high-tech wares and big dreams of the [Tesla](#) board member's "spectacular technology platform."

With promises of a big new “Sky Story” next year, Katzenberg has joined Nova as an investor, a board member and self-styled strategic advisor, an injection that the younger brother of [Elon Musk](#) insists will take the company into the stratosphere, so to speak. Amid news of the team-up revealed Friday and plans for a \$50 million funding round, Musk and Katzenberg sat down to talk about family entertainment in the sky, aiming high, Paul McCartney, [Elton John](#) and getting the show on the road this weekend.

DEADLINE: *I have to say to both of you, this was not on my bingo card for 2025. I did not see this partnership coming. So, can you give us a little bit of a sense of how it happened and how?*

KIMBAL MUSK: Well, it started a few years ago. I bought a division of Intel doing drone light entertainment. Took it to Burning Man in 2022 and Jeffrey saw it there for the first time, and ...

JEFFREY KATZENBERG: Dominic, did you know I was a Burner?

DEADLINE: *One learns something new every day ...*

MUSK: And then Jeffrey and I have gotten to know each other. I was invited to, he asked me to do a show for a private audience earlier this year. I did an original story, and, the audience was blown away, he was blown away.

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DEADLINE: *Which led to you guys joining forces so to speak?*

MUSK: I just wanted his advice, because I have so much admiration for his work as a storyteller. Some of my favorite movies of all time are Jeffrey's movies. And during this process, he said, you know, maybe this could be a fun thing to join. So, he joined as an investor, but also as a strategic advisor to help us build a business and also build the creative now.

KATZENBERG: What he has, what will be revealed very quickly, is a spectacular technology platform that is these proprietary drones. They have been designed very specifically for this purpose — they are purpose-built for art. The features and functions around these are quite dazzling. So, it's not just blinking lights in the sky, but when you look at the complexity of it, think of it as an individual pixel. It is simply amazing in terms of what they are capable of today and what will be coming in the next generation of drones, which is literally next year.

DEADLINE: *Ok, but I'm just going to be blunt with you: In today's America, a lot of people hear the names Katzenberg and Musk put together, and they're like, no, you must have a typo there. That can't work. So, how does the relationship work?*

KATZENBERG: I will tell you this. There's not a meeting that I've had, not a Zoom that I've had, not a phone call that I've had with Kimbal over this last four or five months in which I hang up from it, and I have not been inspired. He is an artist. He's a creator. He's an entrepreneur, and he's a technologist. Yes, there is the name Musk, but I don't believe he has yet gotten the recognition that he is going to get from what he is doing, what he has done. And what he is doing is great. It's a privilege to be working with him.

MUSK: Thank you. Jeffrey, yeah, honestly.

Look Dominic, I'm very good at technology, but it's not my love. I love the art form. I've been a musician my whole life, a storyteller. Now, because I've been involved in technology, what I end up doing in those companies, whether it's Tesla or companies I've been part of, it's always in product design. It's always in the customer experience. So, for me, Nova is this

beautiful, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to completely dive in on the storytelling, artistic side of who I am, and it's just been wonderful, especially with Jeffrey now onboard.

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DEADLINE: *So, you are stepping back from most of those other companies, with your brother, to focus on Nova now?*

MUSK: Yes, except for Tesla. Otherwise, Nova's my passion, and I'm just so happy to have the opportunity to grow it. And Jeffrey's done this before so many times, and it just kind of is working out so well that he wants to do this with us.

DEADLINE: *You know Jeffrey, after the crash of Quibi, and then the outcome of the election last year, where you were in the fundraising seat for Biden, the consensus was you were stepping back, out of the spotlight. This is very much stepping right back in center stage in many ways.*

KATZENBERG: Well, my WndrCo is a venture fund that's doing a number of things and we are almost exclusively tech builders and investors. But I will say, this is the first thing that has come along that has really excited me for a while for a couple of reasons. One, Kimbal has pioneered a technology here that is spectacular, and that it creates a new form of immersive storytelling in a way that is just, it's just not there right now otherwise.

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DEADLINE: *To that, I know Nova has had some successes with concerts, aerial installations so to speak, but how do you plan to monetize this for the big leagues?*

KATZENBERG: Dominic, you think today, there are two things that happened in stadiums today, which are mostly empty, yeah?

DEADLINE: *Sure ...*

KATZENBERG: Epic sporting events and epic concert tours, right? If we succeed at, Kimbal's vision for this will be the third leg of that stool just a couple of years down the road.

DEADLINE: *Alright ...*

KATZENBERG: Let me give you two analogies that I've been using, because it helps people understand what we're doing and where we want to go.

In 1990, I saw a short film called *Luxo Jr* and I was blown away by the potential of this absolutely complete breakthrough and spectacular innovation that John Lasseter and Steve Jobs created. Now you jump 20 years later, even more and you know that CGI animation has literally become the single most successful form of storytelling, consistently of any form of art, and it started with that film, that little, short film.

I believe that is what Kimbal has created today, when he revealed to me not just these things that you're seeing, but what is coming within a year, 18 months. This is that kind of a breakthrough here, in terms of what he has he has created.



Elton John from the documentary 'Never Too Late'

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So, that's analogy one that I would say to you, and the outcome here is which will go to story number two.

I remember going to see Elton John at The Troubadour here in L.A., a great show, but in a small club. Just a few years later, I went and I saw Elton John at Dodger Stadium. There were 60,000, 70,000 paying customers, one of the most extraordinary shows ever. With Nova Sky Stories, you're looking at Elton John today at the Troubadour. In five years, Kimbal is going to be at Dodger Stadium on the main stage. This technology and his storytelling are going to create an experience that will go to stadiums all over the world: football stadiums, soccer stadiums, racetracks, any place you can gather tens of thousands of people together.

DEADLINE: *Ambitious, and on brand, one might say.*

MUSK: And we're doing it now. This is a show we started last year. We sold 6000 tickets. We are on track to sell half a million tickets this year. We are flying this weekend alone because it's digital art, we have fleets all over the world. London, Nice, the Netherlands, San Francisco, Australia. I believe those are the five this weekend alone and each one of them is between 3000-5000 paying customers per evening.

Still, I look at it as it's like we're playing bars right now. Yeah, and we are not even in the clubs yet and not the stadiums. We've worked with Paul McCartney, the NBA and others. We've worked with the greatest artists. What we have found, though, is that we can draw the audience with our own content, with our own stories, and it's just so much more fun.

KATZENBERG: It's also a much different business.

DEADLINE: *How so?*

KATZENBERG: It has been flattering and very valuable to build the brand by being, in effect, an opening act for some of the most interesting and talented and creative artists around the world in different settings. And we will selectively continue to do those things Dominic, as we build to Dodger Stadium.

Dodger Stadium is the end goal.

We're not going to get there in a heartbeat, if we haven't built the brand. Otherwise, how do we make sure we fill it? So, earning a reputation and dazzling audiences, you know, as opening acts is good, great. You know, how many opening acts do we know that have gone on to, ultimately, you know, be on the main stage themselves? Well, we have to earn our way there. We understand that that is part of brand building. But our objective here is a branded family entertainment with Nova Sky Stories, creating our own characters, creating our own stories here that build the IP of the company.

DEADLINE: *To that, what's the takeaway five years from now?*

MUSK: My takeaway is I want you to fall in love with one of our characters. Really emotionally connect with something in the sky that is two football fields high, two football fields deep, two football fields wide, as if it's a close friend.

KATZENBERG: It's what I've done before — help create Nova to be a great family branded storytelling company.

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